

The Newsletter of RSG

SIREN

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2 SUMMER 1996

Editorial

Welcome to the second issue of *Siren*, the newsletter of RSG. The Cold War Research Study Group, is a specialist study group, parented by Subterranea Britannica. RSG is a non-political organisation, and aims to present an objective view of the UK's infrastructure and plans used in the period 1945 - 1995 for National Defence.

We will not infringe knowingly on any subject matter covered by the Official Secrets Act, nor will we become involved in any wild, conspiracy type theories

I have been very encouraged by the response that the first issue generated. My phone hasn't stopped ringing! A plea to anyone who wants to speak to me: I am always happy to talk to people on any aspect of RSG's activities, and happy to share information, but please try to contact me before 9pm on a weekday - I have had a few individuals phoning me at 11pm!! As you read this, the first inaugural meeting should have taken place on Saturday 13 July, in the famous Kingsway Underground Exchange under High Holborn, London. A big thank you to BT for enabling the visit.

Also, thanks must go to all those who have contributed articles for publication: Keep them coming!

Its amazing where articles come from. I was talking to my father-in law, about various Cold War installations, and it transpired that when he was with the Air Ministry Works Department, he was foreman on a major project at Barnham in Suffolk, to build the first RAF Nuclear Bomb Dump! After some gentle persuasion, he produced an excellent account of his experiences, which I have included in this issue.

A request has come from Ian Sanderson of the West Yorkshire Archaeological Service, for any readers of *Siren* aware of any Cold War

sites in West Yorkshire to contact him on (01924) 306801.

He also raises the point, that readers should be aware of the work done by their local County Sites and Monuments Record. If you are aware of any Cold War sites in your area, contact them, to ensure that they are put on the County Record and are not lost. Infact, I would like to make a request to all readers to make sure that at least their local ROC post should be recorded. Victor Smith of the New Tavern Fort Project in Gravesend, has done this to ensure that rare surviving examples of 1950's Civil Defence Wardens posts and *Siren* points in his area have been recorded

As always I welcome any articles and feedback. Please let me know YOUR thoughts and ideas
Contact me at:

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Earls Colne
COLCHESTER
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Tel: (01787) 224729 (before 9pm please!)

Civil Defence Publications

Ian Sanderson has compiled this list of CD Corps Publications from the Cold War era, that readers may find useful. It first appeared in *Loopholes*
Number 11, March 1995:

Civil Defence Manual of Basic Training Vol. 1

Pamphlet No1: Ambulance Section (1951)

No 2: Welfare Section (1952)

No 2a: Welfare Section - Emergency Feeding (1952)

No 2b: Welfare Section - Improvisation of large scale Cooking Equipment (1952)

No 3: Warden Section (1951)

No 4: Headquarters Section (1953)

No 6: Organisation of Civil Defence and Allied Welfare Services (1952)

No 8: Principles of Damage Control (1951)

No. 9 Reconnaissance and Reporting (1952)

Civil Defence Manual of Basic Training Vol. 2

Pamphlet No1: Chemical Warfare (1951)

No 2: Basic Firefighting (1952)

No 3: Basic First Aid (1951)

No 4: Basic Rescue (1951)

No 5: Basic methods of Protection against High Explosive Missiles (1949, '52, '53)

No 6: Atomic Warfare (1951, 1953)

No 7: (Provisional) Biological Warfare (1951)

Manual of Civil Defence Vol. 1

Pamphlet No 1: Nuclear Weapons (1956, '59, '74)

No 2: Radioactive Fallout: Provisional Scheme of Public Control (1956)

Civil Defence Handbooks

No 1: Wireless Instructions For Civil Defence and as Line and Wireless Instructions (1952)

No 2: Field Cable Construction (1954, '59, '61)

No 3: Exercises and Studies (1953, 1964)

No 4: Elementary Fire-Fighting (1957, 1962)

No 5: Basic Rescue (1957, 1962)

No 7: Rescue (1960)

No 8: Emergency Feeding (1960)

No 9: Signal Office Practice (1960)

No 10: advising the Householder on Protection against Nuclear Attack (1963)

Civil Defence Pocket Books

No 1: The Elements of First Aid (1957)

No 2: Military Support in Civil Defence (Restricted 1958, 1960)

No 3: General Information (1960)

No 4: Warden Section (1961)

No 5: Rescue Section (1961)

No 7: Ambulance and First Aid Section (1962)

Other General Publications

The Hydrogen Bomb (1957)

Home Defence and the Farmer (1958)

Civil Defence: Notes for Speakers and Canvassers (1959 and '61)

Emergency Home Care (Min of Health 1964)

Military Aid to the Civil Community in the UK (1968)

UKWMO (1976)

Protect and Survive (1980)

Domestic Nuclear Shelters (1981)

Domestic Nuclear Shelters - Technical Guide (1982)

Civil Defence and the Farmer (MAFF 1985)

An Atomic Bomb Storage Depot - Some observations as remembered during the construction period circa 1952-53

The following article was written by my father-in-law Mr George Hill, who was in the PSA of the DoE. It is a fascinating account of how the A-bomb depot at RAF Barnham (just outside Thetford, Suffolk) was built. The depot at Barnham was previously used as a Chemical Weapons store.

General Construction:

All buildings of single storey, of reinforced concrete, concrete blocks with flat roofs; all concrete mixed on site. All steelwork including reinforcement bonded for continuity and earthed.

Some Building Details:

Three large central buildings, built semi-submerged in embankments.

No windows, a complex air conditioning system installed to ensure all air clean, dry and at a specific temperature. Floors of special iron hard and spark free finish.

Overhead gantry crane at entrance [These were the assembly buildings, where the bombs were fitted with the "physics package" and had routine maintenance carried out - Ed]

A smaller central building, completely covered within the structure with wire mesh (floors, walls and roof within) Completely bonded and earthed

Bomb storage:

Individual Bomb Storage buildings, approx. 6' x 6' x 6'. Base consisted of at least a 5' deep concrete block, in which a hole was formed to receive the weapon container of approximate size to an old fashioned milk churn. The container was constructed of 2" thick steel with a counter weighted lid secured by a 16 lever padlock. The storage building doors were of solid timber faced with sheet steel and secured by a combination lock.

Standby Generator Building:

This housed a 6 cylinder marine type diesel engine which was assembled on site. Coupled to the engine was the generator and also a compressor with its own static battery power supply. The whole arranged so that if the public power failed, the compressor would cut in to start the engine, with no more than a short break in power to the site

Control Centre:

If any door on the weapon storage buildings was opened, it would be indicated on a control panel. Also the entrance gates were controlled from here, and surveillance of the outer alarmed fence.

A similar complex was under construction elsewhere [Faldingworth, near Market Rasen, Lincs - Ed] but not as advanced as this one. It was decided to speed up construction but winter was upon us. Nevertheless, the whole site was floodlit from mobile generators, to extend the working day. Boilers were brought in to provide steam, which was injected into the heaps of aggregates to prevent freezing; special high heat cement was used and antifreeze put in the mixing water. The concrete was insulated after being placed in formwork to prevent heat loss. At this stage I moved off of the project and onto a major runway extension and taxiway re-alignment contract at RAF Shepherds Grove. The current use of the site is as light industrial units.

60 Secret Mustard gas Sites Uncovered - *Independent* - 4 June 1996

This article described how 60 sites across the UK, which were used for the production and storage of Mustard Gas and thought cleared back in the 50's and 60's are still contaminated. Some sites yielded between 20 and 120 mustard gas bombs each. Most of the storage and filling depots were built during the last war, but remained active up until the mid 50's, until sufficient nuclear weapons became available to counter the Soviet Threat. A team from RAF Wittering were called to Barnham in Suffolk and found 16 live Mustard Gas Bombs

Warning Points

As many of you know, there was a UK wide network of warning points, from which the Attack Warning would be broadcast to the Public. These were in such places as Railway Stations, main Telephone Exchanges, Hospitals, Police, Fire and Ambulance stations. In rural areas, usually the local Pub was used. In the Village of Stisted in Essex the "Onley Arms" Public house was used. I was shown the correspondents between the Police (who operated the network) and the Publican, Mr Peddle-Smith.

The WB 1400 carrier line broadcast receiver was mounted on a shelf in the hallway behind the Public Bar. It gave out a constant 'pip' tone to let the operator know it was connected

- the volume of the tone could be turned down. The Police would test the system on a regular basis, by transmitting the warning signal plus a spoken message repeated for 5 minutes. The warning point operator would complete a questionnaire and return it to the police. Mr Peddle-Smith, told me that their telephone service couldn't be cut off by BT, as it was needed at all times to operate the WB 1400! He was also issued with a hand operated siren, and a set of fallout warning maroons.

STOP PRESS

As this newsletter was being written, I became aware of an article in the latest issue (39) of the Home Office Quarterly Magazine - *Civil Protection*. This describes that the WB 1400 network is now being phased out completely, and should be complete by the end of July 96, some examples have been kept by the ROC and other museums, but the majority have been skipped.

British Nuclear Weapons

Fascinating information has just been published by HMSO, about the complete range of British Nuclear Weapons, carried by RAF bombers from the 50's up to the present day. The book - *RAF Nuclear Deterrent Forces* (priced £45) is a declassified internal MOD document, that has now been released to the public.

The following is a compilation of UK air launched weapons developed over the period 1950 - 1980

Blue Danube (Smallboy) - First UK operational

atomic weapon. Implosion type weapon - yield of approx. 20 Kt. Ballistic case same as WW2 "Tallboy"

Green Bamboo - Megaton boosted fission weapon warhead for free fall bomb and Blue Steel missile (developed into Red Snow).

Green Granite - High Yield, Multi Megaton, staged thermonuclear warhead

Green Grass - ¼ MT. Fission warhead

Orange Herald - Megaton warhead for Blue Streak IRBM - test dropped at Christmas Island

Short Granite - Smaller, lighter version of Green Granite

Red Beard - Kiloton yield tactical bomb used mainly by the Canberra force

Red Snow - Megaton warhead for Blue Steel missile, and Yellow Sun Mk 2 Bomb

Violet Club - Interim Megaton Bomb, consisting of a Green Grass Warhead in a Blue Danube shell.

Yellow Sun Mk1 - Megaton weapon using Green Grass Warhead

Yellow Sun Mk2 - Megaton weapon using Red Snow warhead

WE177 - Low level delivered weapon, with capability of attack against strategic, tactical, hard and soft targets. Yield can be varied. Due to be phased out by 2005.

CD Brain Teaser

In 1982 the Home Office cancelled "Hard Rock" which would of been the biggest Civil Defence exercise since the 1960's. After this it never tried another national exercise but instead instituted a series of regional level exercises for County and District Councils to validate their transition to war plans, communications, etc. These exercises had rather strange names. Can you work out which Home Defence region the following exercises were based?

- a) Vireg (1986)
- b) Heptad (1988)
- c) Ninex (1988)
- d) Triex (1989)
- e) Ivy (1989)

Clue - think Roman!!

(Answers at the end of the newsletter)

Thanks to Steve Fox for submitting this article.

Green Goddess Fire Engine

The Auxiliary Fire Service was re-formed in 1952, and between then and 1957 over a 1000 Bedford S Type Green Goddess were bought, and stored in Home Office supply and Transport Depots throughout the UK. Also Bedford S Type Hose Layers were purchased for the AFS. Some of these vehicles were used for exercises up until 1968 when the AFS and the CD Corps were disbanded.

The majority went into storage until brought out for the fireman's strike in 1977, and were refurbished in 1980, for the series of strikes then. They have been seen in various parts of the UK since then, crewed by troops to provide cover during brigade strikes.

The storage regime for these vehicles was quite amazing. At depots like Marchington, great rows of them stood under cover, in a controlled environment. The suspension was

blocked, so the springs did not sag, and all the engine oil was drained out, and replaced by inhibitor. The battery was removed.

Every day an appliance was chosen, had its suspension de-blocked, and oil put back into the engine. A gallon or so of fuel (petrol) was put in the tank, battery refitted and the vehicle was driven around for about half an hour. At the end of this, the vehicle was drained of fuel and oil, fresh engine inhibitor poured in, battery removed, a quick lube job and the appliance put back on blocks! This process was repeated every day for a different vehicle, with the whole cycle continuously repeating itself.

Recently some Green Goddesses were disposed of by the Home Office. Most went to the Overseas development Agency, for donation to Third World Countries, the rest were snapped up by collectors, and the one I saw, ended up as a long term donation, at the East Anglian Railway Museum near Colchester in Essex. It was built in 1954 and had a genuine 2400 miles on the clock!! It is mechanically sound, with only a little work needed on the bodywork. It came complete with an Coventry Climax auxiliary pump, rescue equipment and hoses. It even has a lovely brass bell, operated by a leather strap, from inside the cab. It will be used as a working fire engine for the site, and as a water tender for the steam trains.

RSG needs you!

I hope you have enjoyed this issue of *Siren*. Remember, it needs YOUR input to make it successful. I always welcome articles and feedback.

To receive RSG on a regular basis (I try to produce at least 3 per year), join Subterranea Britannica - cost £12 (-£5 for unwaged, +£3 for profitmaking organisations +£1 overseas). Membership and general information on the society can be obtained from the Joint Secretaries:

Malcolm and Barbara Tadd
65 Trindles Road, South Nutfield,
Redhill, Surrey, UK.
Tel: 01737 823456

Answers to CD Brainteaser

- a) Vireg - No. 6 Region (South)
- b) Heptad - No.7 Region (West)
- c) Ninex - No.9 Region (West Midlands)
- d) Triex - No.3 region (East Midlands)
- e) Ivy - No. 4 Region (Eastern)